

**Media statement by the Nine+ unions on the COSATU Special National Congress, 1 July 2015**

**Embargoed until 11h00, 1 July 2015**

**Support and Solidarity with CWU**

Although we are here today to brief the press on the up-coming Special National Congress (SNC) of COSATU and what we regard as our revolutionary duty in relation to it, we are also here to express our 100% solidarity with the Communication Workers Union (CWU) who are in dispute with MTN.

After this press conference we will be presenting a memorandum to MTN demanding that they give respect to the demands of the CWU, and settle this dispute without delay. The demands of the CWU are entirely reasonable, and if a more positive attitude is not taken by the MTN we will escalate the dispute, and call for a national and international boycott.

We say to MTN, negotiate in good faith, respect and respond properly to the demands of the CWU, stop deferring decisions to others outside the country, and start behaving as a responsible South African employer unless you want to be a target of a concerted trade union campaign that will not only undermine the reputation of MTN in this country but across the continent, and the world.

We congratulate our comrades from the CWU in braving this particular storm, and providing a shining example of militant, democratic and

deeply committed trade union action that has inspired the entire trade union movement to go back to basics and confront capital or the employer on their intensified exploitation. Amandla!

## **COSATU Special National Congress**

We, the nine unions who in May 2013 issued the call for COSATU to convene a Special National Congress (SNC), have noted that such a Congress has at since been convened, with the victory from a court order, for 13-14 July 2015, two years since the call was made.

Not only do we deplore this long delay in implementing a step which the leadership was constitutionally obliged to take, we are shocked that the proposed agenda for the SNC is an attempt to prevent delegates discussing the most important issues which made such a Congress and its original call necessary.

We petitioned the Congress to have discussion on two items: 1) Discussion on Unity and Cohesion of the Federation and 2) Elections of National Office Bearers. The latter agenda item has been replaced by a vague item called "leadership".

The main reason for calling the SNC was to avoid a disastrous implosion of and split within the federation. Yet the current leadership is now trying to manipulate the Congress in a way which will accelerate such an implosion or precipitate such a split. They claim to be promoting unity but are in fact doing the very opposite and risk turning the SNC into a farce and a basis for implosion.

But we are determined to talk to members of other unions and fight to save the federation from collapse and turn it back into a militant, socialist oriented, worker-controlled and democratic force, capable of uniting all workers behind the resolutions of the COSATU's 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress held in September 2012.

We shall attend and participate in the SNC, but will do so under, and register a, strong protest at this attempt to deny the membership their right to have robust debates on the serious and unprecedented challenges facing the federation.

In particular we will insist that the Congress delegates be allowed to discuss the expulsion of NUMSA, with its 365 000 members, the dismissal of the General Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, and to deliberate on the acceptance of a shelf-union, LIMUSA without following the prescriptions of the constitution, to replace NUMSA, and the violation of the constitution in allowing Zingiswa Losi to retain the position as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy President.

We will also raise double standards in the conduct of the COSATU leadership when it comes to the handling of purging of scores of leaders and officials from several affiliates as a result to the differences relating to the current COSATU challenges and own organizational allegations of corruption.

The current leadership is insisting that NUMSA and the GS cannot appeal to the SNC, but can only do so at the next "ordinary congress" for which no date has been finalized or notice issued. This is a blatant disregard of the COSATU constitution and we will insist that the appeals of both the GS and NUMSA should be heard at the SNC.

This faction, in the current COSATU divide, is fully aware that the dismissal of hundreds of thousands of members has created an unprecedented deep division ever witnessed yet they want to use this congress to deepen these divisions instead of working on unity.

We shall insist that both issues of Numsa's expulsion and Vavi's dismissals occupy the centre-stage of the purpose of the congress if Unity and Cohesion is truly and genuinely a concern for all of us. In addition, we shall raise the following:

1. Agreeing on strategies for effectively implementing the principles and practices of workers-control, internal democracy and internal controls.
2. Developing a shared understanding of social distance of leaders from members, and agreeing strategies to reverse or reduce this distance, including by going back to the basics of good service to members
3. The need for the implementation of the 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress resolutions. No policy on 'one union one industry' will work if unions do not service members or embark on mass purges of leaders
4. How to accommodate those unorganized workers, particularly the most vulnerable workers, who currently do not fit into the scope of any of the unions.
5. Agreeing on new rules and principles, including dealing the weaknesses in the COSATU constitution and addressing those in strengthening the federation.
6. Using the 1998 COSATU resolution on investment companies as a reference point, developing a shared understanding of union investment companies and the lessons we should draw from past practice and experience.

This should include developing a shared understanding of what constitutes business unionism.

7. Managing relationship with the alliance partners and other civil society to avoid giving way on the important principle of trade union independence and avoiding transforming the trade union movement into a transmission belt or toy telephone.

The crisis in COSATU reflects the contradictions between those leaders who have been won over to the side of the defenders of a neoliberal South African capitalism and those who want to pursue a radical National Democratic Revolution and the struggle for socialism as the only holistic and viable solution to the national, gender and class questions in South Africa and the world.

We are fighting to preserve a socialist oriented, militant, anti-imperialist, democratic, worker-controlled, anti-racist, and non-sexist federation.

This is a clarion call we will follow and a 'battle-cry' that we will take to the SNC and beyond because the working class struggle and unity of workers are paramount than any other consideration, political and otherwise.

**Don't Moan, Mobilize! Don't Mourn, Mobilize! Organize or Starve!**